

## ABSTRACT

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**TITLE:** Rivers Policy and Classification Plan

**SUBJECT:** Management of the state's freshwater resources

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**ABSTRACT:** This plan establishes a course of action for the maintenance or the restoration of all of the state's freshwaters, as well as their immediate environment. Through the efforts of the Rhode Island Rivers Council freshwater bodies have been classified in accordance with the classification system that was legislatively established. The plan also sets forth the procedures for the designation of local watershed councils or associations.



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## PREFACE

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This plan addresses two basic questions: how to protect and improve resource quality in Rhode Island's rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, and associated wetlands, and how to realize public benefit from these resources.

In establishing the Rhode Island Rivers Council in 1991, the General Assembly found that Rhode Island lacked "an affirmative, clearly articulated program to manage and protect its rivers and watershed resources" (*Section 46-28-2(a), General Laws of Rhode Island*). The Rivers Council was created to integrate the wide array of efforts in Rhode Island to protect and enhance riverine resources. The Rivers Council is not a regulatory agency; its functions are planning, coordination, and empowerment. The Rivers Council has three basic duties: 1) to develop a rivers classification plan for Rhode Island, 2) to prepare a rivers policy for Rhode Island, and 3) to recognize local watershed councils as bodies corporate and politic.

The Rivers Council has reviewed river protection efforts, the condition and use of rivers, and aspirations for watershed quality and use. The *Rivers Policy and Classification Plan* has been developed inductively, from the bottom-up. In the course of this work, the Rivers Council has found that there is a vibrant level of public interest in rivers. Planning for rivers is extensive and often high quality. At the state and local levels, programs have been implemented to protect fresh water resources from both point and nonpoint sources of pollution. The need is to make existing efforts more useful to the public.

The Rivers Council Act calls for the *Rivers Policy and Classification Plan* to be adopted by the State Planning Council as an element of the State Guide Plan. With this action, the *Rivers Policy and Classification Plan* will serve formally as guidance for action at the local government level. The real keys to achieving the goals set forth in the Rhode Island Rivers Act are broad understanding of the value of fresh water resources in the state and citizen involvement in watershed protection efforts.

### Adoption

The Rhode Island Rivers Council and the State Planning Council jointly conducted a public hearing on December 1, 1997. The Rivers Council adopted, with amendments, the *Rivers Policy and Classification Plan* on December 17, 1997. The State Planning Council adopted, with amendments, the *Rivers Policy and Classification Plan* as State Guide Plan Element 162 on January 8, 1998.



## Acknowledgments

Preparation of this plan reflects the efforts of several individuals. In 1993, the Rhode Island Rivers Council developed a classification plan that covered all rivers in the state except the West River and Ten Mile River. The Council also developed rivers policies for the state, with the exception of a policy for public participation and public education. (*Source: Rhode Island Rivers Council Annual Report for 1993*). Since that time, members of the Council, chaired by Mr. Kenneth Payne since 1992, have spent many hours reviewing and revising the plan. We also wish to take this opportunity to thank those individuals who took the time to meet with the Council during the review process.

Initial mapping of the river segment classifications was performed by Mr. Steven A. Sawyer, Senior Environmental Planner (resigned in 1995) using the ARC/INFO software licensed to the Statewide Planning Program by Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI), Redlands, California. Mr. John Stachelhaus, RIGIS Manager, and Ms. Kathleen Leddy, Principal Environmental Planner, prepared the various watershed maps.

The Statewide Planning Program not only provided staff support to the Council but also represented the Director of Administration as a member. Mr. Daniel Varin, Associate Director of the Division of Planning (retired in 1995) represented the Director. He was succeeded by Mr. Victor Parmentier, Supervising Planner, who also provided staff support to the Council. Ms. Joyce Karger, Senior Planner, had provided staff support for two years until 1995. The plan was also reviewed by Ms. Susan P. Morrison, Chief, Statewide Planning Program. Additional staff involved in the plan's production were Ms. Kim Gelfuso, Information Services Technician and Mr. Mansuet Giusti, Chief Cartographer.



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